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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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TAGS: SNAR, OGEN/MX

SUBJECT:US CUSTOMS AIR INTERDICTION CAPABILITY

REF MEXICO CITY 05786

1. THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE ON CURRENT U.S. CUSTOMS AIR INTERDICTION CAPABILITIES, ONGOING ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS, AND RECENT PRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCES HAS BEEN PREPARED BY U.S. CUSTOMS FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

2. THE CUSTOMS AIR SUPPORT AIRCRAFT INVENTORY CONSISTS OF A TOTAL OF SEVENTY-ONE (71) AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING SINGLE ENGINE OBSERVERS, MILITARY-TYPE TWIN-ENGINE FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT, AND HELICOPTERS. THE CURRENT FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT SPEEDS RANGE FROM 70 MPH TO 200 MPH. AN ADDITION TO THE INVENTORY, A CESSNA CITATION, IS NOW BEING EQUIPPED WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART ELECTRONIC TRACKING GEAR. THE CITATION'S SPEED WILL ALMOST DOUBLE PRESENT SPEED CAPABILITIES. THE AIRCRAFT ARE LOCATED AT SIX AIR SUPPORT BRANCHES AND

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NUMEROUS SATELLITE LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES,

INCLUDING BOTH THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN BORDER AREAS. THE MAJOR AIR UNITS ARE LOCATED AT MIAMI, TUCSON, NEW ORLEANS, SAN ANTONIO, EL PASO AND SAN DIEGO.

THE MILITARY AIRCRAFT ARE EQUIPPED WITH TRACKING RADAR AND/ OR FORWARD LOOKING INFRARED (?LIR). THE RADAR SYSTEM USED

ALLOWS TRACKING OF SUSPECT AIRCRAFT AT DISTANCES OF 15 MILES. FLIR, ALTHOUGH HAVING A LESSER RANGE OF FIVE (5) MILES, DOES ALLOW DIRECT OBSERVATION OF AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES AS DISPLAYED ON A CATHODE-RAY TUBE IN THE OBSERVER PLANE COCKPIT. THIS IS POSSIBLE EVEN IF THE SUSPECT AIRCRAFT IS OPERATING WITHOUT LIGHTS.

3. A RECENT AGREEMENT, WHICH PROVIDES BORDER RADAR INFORMATION ON ILLEGAL AIR PENETRATIONS TO CUSTOMS AIR SUPPORT UNITS, HAS DIRECTLY RESULTED IN NINE SIGNIFICANT CASES OF WHICH THREE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

ON JUNE 21, 1975, AT APPROXIMATELY 3:00 A.M., RADAR PICKED UP A TARGET ATTEMPTING TO ILLEGALLY PENETRATE U.S. AIR SPACE FROM MEXICO. CUSTOMS AIRCRAFT MADE A DIFFICULT INTERCEPT AS THE SMUGGLER AIRCRAFT, WHICH WAS FLYING "BLACKED OUT", ENTERED THE U.S. NEAR REDDINGTON, ARIZONA. THE VIOLATOR AIRCRAFT LANDED ALONG A PIPELINE ROAD JUST AT DAYBREAK. TWO ARRESTS WERE MADE IN ADDITION TO THE SEIZURE OF ONE AIRCRAFT, ONE PICKUP TRUCK AND 1,600 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA.

ON JUNE 23, 1975, AT APPROXIMATELY 8:45 P.M., A SUSPECT AIRCRAFT WAS OBSERVED ON RADAR AS IT PENETRATED U.S. AIR SPACE SOUTH OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA. AN INTERCEPT WAS MADE BY MEMBERS OF THE TUCSON AIR SUPPORT UNIT WHICH FOLLOWED THE VIOLATOR AIRCRAFT TO A REMOTE AIRSTRIP. AS A RESULT, THREE PERSONS WERE ARRESTED, ONE AIRCRAFT, ONE VEHICLE AND 800 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA WERE SEIZED.

ON JULY 1, 1975, A SUSPECT AIRCRAFT WAS OBSERVED AS IT ENTERED U.S. AIR SPACE ILLEGALLY FROM MEXICO. THE AIRCRAFT WAS INTERCEPTED AND FOLLOWED TO A REMOTE NEW MEXICO AIRSTRIP. TWO PERSONS WERE ARRESTED, ONE AIRCRAFT AND 800 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA WERE SEIZED.

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4. (A) ONE OF THE MORE AMBITIOUS STEPS IN ASSISTING MEXICAN CUSTOMS HAS BEEN THE COMPLETION OF A COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY IN LATE 1972. THIS LED TO A GRANT OF \$50,000 UNDER THE CCINC PROGRAM FOR PURCHASE OF POINT-TO-POINT RADIO EQUIPMENT. THIS EQUIPMENT, WHICH INCLUDES AIRCRAFT AND MOBILE RADIOS, AS WELL AS BASE STATIONS FACILITIES, WILL

BE COMPATIBLE WITH SIMILAR EQUIPMENT NOW USED BY THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE ALONG THE BORDER. THE MEXICAN CUSTOMS SERVICE, RECOGNIZING THE MERITS OF THIS PROJECT, ADDED \$70,000 OF ITS OWN FUNDS TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE SYSTEM, THUS RESULTING IN A JOINT ORDER OF \$120,000 OF EQUIPMENT.

THIS NEW EQUIPMENT ALLOWS DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CUSTOMS OFFICERS OF BOTH COUNTRIES AND WILL RESULT IN MORE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION BETWEEN U.S. AND MEXICAN ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL. THE AIRCRAFT USED IN SMUGGLING MERCHANDISE INTO MEXICO ARE OFTEN THE SAME AIRCRAFT INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING CONTRABAND INCLUDING NARCOTICS INTO THE UNITED STATES.

(B) TREASURY IS OF THE OPINION THAT FURTHER COORDINATION BETWEEN U.S. CUSTOMS AIR INTERDICTION UNITS AND COUNTERPART MEXICAN AIR DETECTION CUSTOMS UNITS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS INTERDICTION EFFORT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT GOM OFFICIALS SHOULD BE APPROACHED TO DETERMINE THEIR REACTION TO SUCH A LIAISON. U.S. CUSTOMS IS PREPARED TO ASSIST GOM IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN AIR INTERDICTION.

5. EFFECTIVE APPROXIMATELY SEPTEMBER 1, 1975, ALL PRIVATE AIRCRAFT DEPARTING MEXICO FOR U.S. WILL BE REQUIRED TO NOTIFY U.S. CUSTOMS OR FAA NOT LATER THAN 15 MINUTES PRIOR TO PENETRATION OF U.S. AIR SPACE AND TO LAND AT ONE OF 13 DESIGNATED AIRPORTS ALONG THE BORDER RATHER THAN AT ANY DESIGNATED AIRPORT THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AS NOW EXISTS. THIS REPORTING REQUIREMENT COUPLED WITH CUSTOMS COMPUTERIZED LOOKOUT SYSTEM (TECS) WILL PERMIT CUSTOMS TO DETECT AIRCRAFT ILLEGALLY ENTERING THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNITED STATES AND CARRYING ILLICIT CONTRABAND.

6. ONGOING COOPERATION/COORDINATION WOULD BE ENHANCED BY CONCLUSION PROPOSED CUSTOMS-TO-CUSTOMS AGREEMENT FORWARDED MARCH 12, 1975, BY EMBASSY TO DIRECTOR GENERAL MEXICAN CUSTOMS ON WHICH WE STILL AWAITING RESPONSE.

FYI -- U.S. CUSTOMS AIR SUPPORT BRANCH ARRESTS AND SEIZURES TOTALS FOR FY 75 ARE: ARRESTS-188; ITEMS SEIZED-- AIRCRAFT-46, VEHICLES-70, VESSELS-17, HEROIN-4 OZ., COCAINE-6.9 LBS., HASHISH-16.8 LBS., MARIJUANA-114,443 LBS., WEAPONS-15, AMMUNITION-8550 ROUNDS. KISSINGER

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